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Adventures in Librarianship -- The Dixon Tapes

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great when someone says “yes,” but you might be surprised to learn that almost nobody ever says “no.” Rather, they say nothing so you have to keep investing and they just keep ducking and dodging. It’s a lot of work to keep pumping all those dry holes.

Dolce... **Michigan** and **Oxford** must be building quite a lot of infrastructure through this. It must be nice to have an infusion of cash to hire new staff, equip their workspaces, and make decisions about millions of dollars of other people’s money. Kind of a rush, actually, to see your vision enacted.


Dog... There are presently nine people paid on **EEBO-TCP** funds. A content specialist/outreach librarian, five reviewers (three at **Michigan** and two at **Oxford**), production coordinators at both institutions (partial appointments) and a programmer (partial). Some of these folks have fall back rights but six of them depend solely on the project’s ability to generate enough revenue to sustain them. There are also an unknown to me number of folks employed on this project by three international keyboarding firms who depend on our continued throughput for their livelihood. Many other staff (technical, bibliographers, legal, P.R., business and finance) from our libraries and campuses are involved — myself included — without compensation from project funds. It is donated time to make a go of an initiative that our library directors believe in. All things considered, it’s a lot of obligation leading to a sometimes too personal sense of responsibility and accountability. If I had wanted to run a small business in life, and assume the personal risks of failure, it would make more sense to do it in a way that affords some upside potential beyond the

vague ideal of advancing scholarship.

Dolce... The **EEBO-Text Creation Partnership** started with a vision that culturally important texts could be accurately and intelligently keyed and tagged and that eventually the texts could find their way into the public domain—a real service to scholarship that could extend beyond the bounds of a hundred privileged campuses. The model put forth was to some extent tailored to the content of the corpus but, at root, we always knew that it could be extended to cover the conversion of other historical corpora. When **EEBO** showed some commercial success for **ProQuest**, there was indeed interest expressed by others not only in converting some of their extensive microfilm holdings but doing so in conjunction with the **EEBO-TCP** model that seemingly had a receptive ear in the marketplace. No doubt, it is nice to be in a position to influence the direction of product development on the commercial side. It is a pleasant surprise to discover some very smart and caring folks in these companies who, all things being equal, would prefer to do things that the market wants rather than forever sailing — and selling — into a headwind. And while I say this generally, I would be remiss not to point out that there are outstanding folks at **ProQuest** that took a risk on our proposed model, worked hard to sell the idea to their own top management, and were willing to accept the consequences if their best judgment turned out to be wrong. I’ll cherish these relationships forever.

Dog... I’ve come to see the commercial producers of scholarly information as a kind of disorganized lot (maybe **Elsevier** will just buy the rest of them and fix all that). While probably well-meaning, there seems to be a lot they don’t know about their market, and in many instances they seem more driven by the needs and demands of content providers and rights holders than of the communities

that will buy and use their products (and let me be clear here that the reader shouldn’t assume I’m talking about **ProQuest** — I’ve had lots of conversations with lots of vendors about moving their content forward). As a group, the vendors suffer from self-imposed isolation that makes it impossible to learn from others — either successes or failures. Without access to information about competitive products that is common knowledge to hundreds of librarians, the vendors seem destined to repeat the mistakes of those that have gone before. While discrete, they appear to take more than a little pleasure in the missteps of their competitors but don’t really have the means or will to learn from those experiences. Rather, they blithely assume that their own efforts will be well received by librarians, their OCR will be stunningly accurate, and their servers will never crash. Maybe like all sales cultures, these publishers and vendor rely more on optimistic projections than sober planning and project management.

So, what’s the answer? Based on my **EEBO-TCP** experience would I consider giving up my library job and acquisitions budget in return for spending my days trying to grab a slice of the budgets of others? As I’ve said above, it’s not without its rewards but I wouldn’t want to be doing it “for real.” For me, it’s the lack of control over outcomes that makes selling stressful and unappealing. No matter how hard you work, how pleasant and obsequious you are to your market, how well you dress, in the final analysis you don’t control your own destiny. You are dependent on the whims of others and that’s a kind of stress that librarians don’t need to covet. It’s bad enough worrying about your own overflowing in-box, but imagine if your income, job security and identity were tied to the in-boxes of ten or twenty or a hundred other people. Be careful what you wish for. 



Adventures in Librarianship — The Dixon Tapes

by **Ned Kraft** (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State)
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If you earned your MLS on or before 1972 you will certainly remember the Carpetgate affair that led to the fall of **Dr. Richard Dixon**, the Dean of **Darkmound University Library**. As a result of the **Freedom of Information** suit brought against the university, the **Superior Court of New York** has forced the release of thousands of hours of **Dixon’s** recorded phone messages and private meetings. The **Dean** apparently bugged his own office in an effort to gather evidence against “enemies” he believed were infiltrating the office disguised as custodial staff, work-

study students, and management consultants.

The **ATG Editorial Board** offers the following partial transcript as a cautionary tale to academic library directors who, like **Dixon**, drink too much coffee and inadequately supervise their serial binding operations. The text is from the April 14th, 1972 meeting between **Dean Dixon** and his administrative counsel, **Rory Haldeminsk**. This segment of the transcript is often referred to as the “smoking gun.”

HALDEMINSK: Sir, we have a problem with the...

DIXON: You’re telling me! Have you seen the [unintelligible] and the teaching staff breathing down my neck about the, about the quality of the collection and so forth. Those [expletive], I’ll give ‘em quality right up the...

HALDEMINSK: Yes.

DIXON: That’s right.

HALDEMINSK: But what I meant was, what I meant to say was about the fund-raising dinner. **Connolly** says people are very unhappy.

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DIXON: So, so who's supposed to be happy? What with the, the uh communists and so forth. Are you happy? Am I happy?

HALDEMINSK: Of course not, Sir. But **Connelly** says the food was bad [unintelligible] and he blames you.

DIXON: Blames me? How the...

HALDEMINSK: Yes and...

DIXON: Well just, you tell **Connelly** that I am not a cook. **Richard Dixon** is not a cook.

HALDEMINSK: He doesn't think you are, Sir. But the, uh [coughing] and he thinks that the uh budget for the event he says, **Connelly** says, was not reflected by the quality. He called the orchestra a bunch of plumbers.

DIXON: They may have been plumbers but that doesn't mean they can't also be a [expletive] fine combo in their spare time, I mean...

HALDEMINSK: Yes they were but the [coughing]... so he thinks that maybe we skimmed the budget... you know, padded then skimmed.

DIXON: Both you mean? Couldn't we have padded but not skimmed? Or even skimmed without padding? Do the two...

HALDEMINSK: Of course, Sir. But the difficulty is that he, you know, he's looking closely and, and he's already been to see **Mitchell**.

DIXON: He went to...

HALDEMINSK: That's right, and you know, with that information he may be able to draw a direct line, sort of follow the money, to the uh, to the thing.

DIXON: Yes, I see. The thing. But I wasn't involved with that. That was **Mitchell's** project and [unintelligible].

HALDEMINSK: Well, you may have, you may have accidentally signed off on the expenses...

DIXON: [Expletive] **Haldeminsk**, you're supposed to stop me from doing that! Oh the student press is going to have a field day with this, the little communists. They've just been waiting for me to, for me to, you know, stumble and so forth...

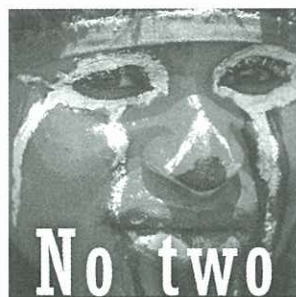
HALDEMINSK: Yes sir.

DIXON: Any way we can put a muzzle on this? Can we count on **Mitchell**?

HALDEMINSK: He, uh [coughing] he might be looking to protect himself at this point, sir.

DIXON: You tell **Mitchell** he better protect himself from me. If he roles over on this, I'll make sure he never works in another library again... and so forth!

[In May of 1972, the Darkmound Student Gazette broke the story that the library administration had skimmed from the fund-raising dinner budget to pay for new carpet in the library's conference room. Although Dean Dixon was never directly implicated, he was forced to resign in disgrace and retire to his family home in Dewey Beach, Delaware]



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Send ideas by June 30, 2002, to any of the Conference Directors listed above.

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